

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TAGS: ELAB VE

SUBJECT: IRON MINERS TO FORM SINGLE UNION

REF CARACAS 5467

1. THE CONFEDERATION OF VENEZUELAN WORKERS (CTV) HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE LONG-ANTICIPATED SINGLE TRADE UNION OF IRON MINERS (SUT-RAHIERRO) WILL BE LEGALLY CONSTITUTED ON SEP 16 IN PUERTO ORDAZ. ELECTIONS FOR A PERMANENT EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WILL BE HELD ON OCT 30. THE NEW UNION WILL REPLACE SEVEN SMALL UNIONS AND WILL INCLUDE ALL FORMER EMPLOYEES OF THE ORINOCO MINING COMPANY AND THE IRON MINES COMPANY WHO ARE NOW EMPLOYED BY THE GOV-OWNED CORPORACION VENEZOLANO DE GUAYANA (CVG).

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE ELECTIONS FAR OUTWEIGH THE THREE OR FOUR THOUSAND WORKERS WHO WILL CONSTITUTE THE NEW UNION BECAUSE OF THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS TAKING PLACE IN THE METALS INDUSTRY IN THE CIUDAD GUAYANA REGION. AD, COPEI, MAS, MEP, PCV, MIR, AND EVERY OTHER GROUP WITH ANY KIND OF LABOR FOLLOWING ARE PUTTING CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES AND EFFORT INTO TRYING TO MAKE A GOOD SHOWING IN THE UNION ELECTIONS. MAS IN PARTICULAR IS MAKING AN ALL-OUT DRIVE. ONE OF ITS PRINCIPAL LEADERS, TEODORO PETKOFF, RESIDES IN CIUDAD

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GUAYANA, AND OTHER TOP MAS LABOR LEADERS ARE FREQUENT VISITORS.

MAS WAS ENCOURAGED BY ITS SECOND-PLACE FINISH BEHIND AD IN LAST YEAR'S SIDOR STEEL MILL ELECTIONS AND THE ANTI-AD SENTIMENT AMONG THE IRON MINERS PROVOKED BY THE WILDCAT STRIKES IN THE IRON MINES EARLIER THIS YEAR. AD HAS PUT EXPERIENCED LABOR ACTIVIST ANGEL ZERPA MAIRABAL IN CHARGE OF ITS ELECTION EFFORT. THE AD LEADERS OF THE CTV INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH HAVE SENT FETRAMETAL (THE INDUSTRIAL FEDERATION WITH WHICH SUTRAHIERRO WILL PRESUMABLY AFFILIATE) PRESIDENT JOSE MOLLEGAS AND SECRETARY GENERAL ANDRES MERCAU ON FOREIGN TOURS WHICH WILL LAST UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS. MOLLEGAS, WHILE A MEMBER OF AD, IS NOT TRUSTED BECAUSE OF HIS EARLIER HISTORY OF DEFECTION FIRST TO MEP, THEN TO AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION AND LATER TO THE CONGRESS OF WORKERS. MERCAU IS ONE COPEI'S CHIEF LABOR OPERATIVES AND IS RUMORED TO HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE OVER MOLLEGAS.

3. COMMENT: AD HAS BEEN TRYING TO POSTPONE THESE ELECTIONS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE IN THE HOPES THE HARD FEELING ENGENDERED BY THE WILDCATS WOULD DIE DOWN. APPARENTLY AD NOW FEELS THAT IT MUST MOVE AHEAD, PERHAPS TO TRY TO SEW UP THE IRON MINES BEFORE PETROLEUM NATIONALIZATION TAKES PLACE. THE NEW UNION'S FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WILL BE TO NEGOTIATE A CONTRACT TO REPLACE THE IRON MINES AGREEMENT WHICH EXPIRED IN FEB OF THIS YEAR AND THE ORINOCO MINING AGREEMENT WHICH WILL EXPIRE ON SEP 25. THE NEW CONTRACTS WILL BE RETROACTIVE.
SHLAUDEMAN

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